

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

OMB-01 /060 W

----- 077002

R 271713Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0372

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 08484

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: WILLY BRANDT RETURNS TO THE FRAY

REF: BONN A-L87

BEGIN SUMMARY: AFTER THE PERIOD OF DEPRESSION FOLLOW-
ING HIS RESIGNATION AS CHANCELLOR, WILLY BRANDT IS ONCE
AGAIN ACTIVE AND HIGHLY VISIBLE ON THE GERMAN POLITICAL
SCENE. HIS VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES, WHICH DID WON-
DERS FOR HIS SELF-CONFIDENCE, THE LARGE AND ENTHUSIAS-
TIC CROWDS HE DREW DURING THE RECENT LAENDER ELECTIONS,
AND THE WORKING OUT OF A MODUS OPERANDI WITH CHANCELLOR
SCHMIDT AND FRAKTION CHAIRMAN WEHNER AS TO THE DIVISION
OF POLITICAL LABOR BETWEEN THE THREE, HAVE ALL CONTRIB-
UTED TO BRANDT'S RE-EMERGENCE AS A POLITICAL FORCE IN
THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. BRANDT WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO UN-
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SEAT SCHMIDT AS CHANCELLOR BUT SHOULD SCHMIDT BE FORCED

TO RESIGN FOR ANY REASON, BRANDT WOULD BE HIS MOST
LIKELY SUCCESSOR. END SUMMARY

1. IT CANNOT BE EXPECTED THAT WE WILL EVER SEE THE OLD
"FIGHTING WILLY BRANDT" OF HIS BERLIN DAYS, IF FOR NO
OTHER REASON THAN THE FACT THAT HE HAS GOTTEN OLDER AND
HAS GONE THROUGH SO MUCH. HOWEVER, HIS POPULARITY
WITHIN THE SPD REMAINS EXTREMELY HIGH (ALTHOUGH HE LAGS
BEHIND SCHMIDT IN POPULARITY POLLS BOTH AMONG SPD MEM-
BERS AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE). HIS ROLE AS AN INTEGRA-
TOR OF THE HIGHLY DIVERSE AND COMPETING ELEMENTS WITHIN
THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY REMAINS VITAL TO PARTY UNITY
WHICH WILL BE NECESSARY IF THE SPD IS TO BE SUCCESSFUL
IN NEXT YEAR'S NATIONAL ELECTIONS. SCHMIDT, BRANDT AND
WEHNER HAVE WORKED OUT A SENSIBLE AND EFFICIENT DIVISION
OF LABOR. THE CHANCELLOR IS LEFT FREE OF MANY PARTY
RESPONSIBILITIES, WHICH HE FINDS ONEROUS, AND CAN CON-
CENTRATE ON MANAGING THE GOVERNMENT. EVER SINCE RESIGN-
ING HIS POST AS DEPUTY PARTY CHAIRMAN IN APRIL 1973,
WEHNER HAS DEVOTED MORE AND MORE TIME TO SPD FRAKTION
BUSINESS AND RECENTLY HAS BEEN ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY CON-
CERNED WITH CULTIVATING HIS POWER BASE IN THE FRAKTION
AND LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR HIS REELECTION AS FRAKTION
CHAIRMAN. THE ANIMOSITY BETWEEN WEHNER AND BRANDT HAS
NOT DIMINISHED BUT BOTH AVOID OPEN CONFLICT BY STAYING
OUTSIDE OF EACH OTHER'S PRESERVE. THE STABILIZATION OF
SPD LOSSES AND THE GOOD SHOWING OF THE PARTY IN NORTH
RHINE-WESTPHALIA AND THE SAARLAND HAVE ALSO STRENGTH-
ENED BRANDT'S POSITION. BRANDT PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN
THESE ELECTIONS. HE DREW LARGE AND ENTHUSIASTIC CROWDS
AND IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE ELICITS A MORE EMOTIONAL RE-
SPONSE AMONG THE SPD PARTY FAITHFUL THAN ANY OTHER
LEADING SOCIAL DEMOCRAT. HIS RE-EMERGENCE HAS ALSO
HELPED TO PACIFY THE LEFT-WING OF THE SPD.

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2. BRANDT REMAINS THE MOST LIKELY SUCCESSOR TO HELMUT SCHMIDT SHOULD SCHMIDT BE FORCED, FOR REASONS OF HEALTH, TO RESIGN BUT HE IS NOT ABOUT TO CHALLENGE SCHMIDT'S POSITION AS CHANCELLOR. SHOULD SCHMIDT REMAIN IN SATISFACTORY HEALTH, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT BRANDT WILL BECOME CHANCELLOR AGAIN. HIS RELATIONS WITH THE CHANCELLOR ARE BUSINESSLIKE IF NOT INTIMATE, AND WHILE HE MISSES THE GLAMOROUS SIDE OF PUBLIC OFFICE (WHICH WAS DEMONSTRATED BY THE PLEASURE HE TOOK FROM THE RECEPTION HE RECEIVED IN THE US), HE HAS SNAPPED OUT OF HIS MOOD OF RESIGNATION AND BITTERNESS, WHICH FOLLOWED HIS RESIGNATION A YEAR AGO. EVEN FORMER CRITICS OF BRANDT WITHIN THE SPD ADMIT THAT HE HAS TAKEN HOLD OF THE LEADERSHIP POSITION AND HAS BECOME ACTIVE IN THE DAY-TO-DAY PARTY ORGANIZATIONAL WORK.

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3. RECENTLY, A NORWEGIAN JOURNALIST INDISCREETLY ASKED BRANDT HOW HE LIKED BEING RETIRED FROM POLITICS. THE FORMER CHANCELLOR'S REACTION WAS EXPLOSIVE AND HE REMINDED THE JOURNALIST THAT AS CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY HE REMAINED FULLY ACTIVE IN GERMAN POLITICS. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO ASSUME TT BRANDT IS COMPLETELY FREE OF THE EMOTIONAL SCARS CAUSED BY HIS RESIGNATION. HE HAS, HOWEVER, RE-EMERGED AS AN IMPORTANT POLITICIAN WHO WILL PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, AT LEAST OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT THE SPD LEADERSHIP

CONSTELLATION WILL LOOK LIKE AFTER THE 1976 NATIONAL
ELECTIONS BUT UNTIL THEN THE PRESENT TRIUMVIRATE IS
LIKELY TO REMAIN.

HILLENBRAND

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